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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1353
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9460
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7640
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SUBJECT: JAMAAT ISLAMI LEADER BLAMES AWAMI LEAGUE FOR
RECENT VIOLENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Butenis; Reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (U) On November 2, the Ambassador and Poloff (notetaker) met with Jamaat Islami (JI) Ameer and outgoing Minister for Industry Motiur Rahman Nizami. JI Secretary General and outgoing Minister for Social Welfare Ali Hassan Mohammed Mujahid, Assistant Secretary General Mohammed Kamaruzzaman, and Barrister Abdur Razzaq also attended the meeting.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador told Nizami the image of Bangladesh had been badly damaged by the recent violence. She said the priorities must be to refrain from further violence, and to hold free and fair elections. She appealed to Nizami to be a voice of restraint and call on his supporters not to resort to violence.

¶3. (C) Nizami praised the Ambassador for speaking out against violence. He claimed the JI had been victims of AL violence during the disturbances on October 28 and 29. He said Awami League (AL) supporters attacked a JI rally near the National Mosque with oars, bombs, and firearms, and that five JI supporters died "on that spot." He said that 13 of the 23 people killed as a result of violence over the weekend were JI supporters. Nevertheless, he assured the Ambassador "we are motivating our people to maximum tolerance," and stressed that it was his "solemn duty to ask our people not to seek retribution."

¶4. (C) The JI staff showed the Ambassador a graphic ten-minute documentary video they had produced using TV footage of the violence. The video depicted several scenes in which oar-wielding AL demonstrators appeared to be surging towards JI supporters. One infamous scene showed a crowd of people beating a man on the ground to death with oars and sticks. Other scenes depicted people, some soaked in blood, being kicked and beaten. Another shot clearly showed a demonstrator on the AL side of the barricades firing a small firearm at the other side.

¶5. (C) At the end of the film, Nizami again assured the Ambassador the JI is committed to non-violence. He said the JI leadership will continue to urge supporters to refrain from violence, saying they will only "defend themselves."
BUTENIS